

**Библиотеки как ресурс и катализатор для демократической оппозиции
в парламентских и президентских государствах**

**Libraries as a Resource and Catalyst for the Democratic Opposition
in Parliamentary and Presidential States**

**Бібліотеки як ресурс і каталізатор для демократичної опозиції
в парламентських і президентських державах**

Фрэнсис Т. Кирквуд

Парламентская библиотека, Оттава, Онтарио, Канада

Francis T. Kirkwood

Library of Parliament, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Френсіс Т. Кірквуд

Парламентська бібліотека, Оттава, Онтаріо, Канада

Участие библиотекарей России и всего мира в сопротивлении путчу 1991г. в Москве можно считать началом процесса, в результате которого библиотекари стали восприниматься как реальная сила при формировании демократической оппозиции правительствам. Основным инструментом библиотек в этой области являются свободный доступ к информации и свобода самовыражения. Библиотеки стоят на службе общественных интересов, как ограничивая действия властей, так и препятствуя распространению беспорядков. Их деятельность направляется и поддерживается законом. Гражданское общество предполагает эффективный контроль над действиями властей не только со стороны правовых или законодательных институтов, но и формирование постоянно развивающейся системы демократической оппозиции на всех уровнях государственной власти.

В докладе обсуждается та роль, которую могут взять на себя библиотеки как источник и катализатор формирования демократической оппозиции в современных свободных обществах. Для существования и развития демократии в обществе должны существовать возможности для диалога, деятельности оппозиции и протеста. Эти возможности должны быть включены в структуру и деятельность власти на всех уровнях: от муниципальных советов и администраций до законодательной и исполнительной ветвей власти на общегосударственном уровне. Однако деятельность граждан в этом направлении может быть эффективной только в том случае, если они хорошо информированы, знают свои права и обязанности и осведомлены обо всех действиях и грехах правительства. В противном случае в обществе будет наблюдаться дефицит демократии, и общество окажется под контролем олигархов, чиновников, одной единственной партии или тирана.

Библиотеки являются естественными центрами информации и обмена мнениями. Благодаря этому они должны сыграть решающую роль в информировании граждан, которые будут избавлены от чувства страха, вспомнят о роли народа в истории борьбы за свободу и о том, что у них достаточно силы для реформирования или смены правительства.

Кратко проанализированы три типа возможного вклада в дело демократии тех библиотек, которые работают с правительственной информацией, а также их непростые взаимоотношения со СМИ. Приводятся результаты сравнительного анализа вклада библиотек в развитие демократии в парламентских государствах (Канада или Великобритания) и президентских государствах (Франция, США, Украина или Российская Федерация).

The participation of the librarians of Russia and the world in the resistance to the coup in Moscow in 1991 is the starting point for a consideration of the role of librarians in building the democratic opposition to governments through free access to information and freedom of expression. Libraries serve the public interest by limiting the forces of both power and disorder in order to promote a truly free and healthy civil society, both ruled and supported by law. Such a society presupposes effective checks on the power of government, not only by other institutional actors such as the judiciary or the legislature, but by an ongoing system of participative and adversarial democracy at all levels of state power.

This paper examines the role which libraries can perform as a resource and catalyst for the democratic opposition in modern free societies. For democratic life to survive and grow in a society there must be opportunities for consultation, opposition and protest built into the fabric and experience of public administration, from the level of municipal councils and service authorities to the level of the national legislature and the national executive. But such citizen action in relation to governing bodies can only flourish where there is an informed citizenry which knows its rights and its public responsibilities, the policies and deeds of governments and their sins. Otherwise there is a democratic deficit and society reverts to the control of oligarchies, bureaucrats, a single political party or a tyrant. Libraries are a natural setting for both information

and the public exchange of ideas and so have a vital role to play in creating an informed and unafraid citizenry, mindful of its history of freedom and of its power to reform and change governments.

The three types of democratic contribution of library professionals who manage and provide government information are briefly examined, as is their uneasy relationship with the mass media. Then the role of libraries in fostering democracy is contrasted in parliamentary states such as Canada or Britain and in presidential states such as France, the United States of America, Ukraine or the Russian Federation.

Участь бібліотекарів Росії й всього світу в опорі путчу 1991р. в Москві можна вважати початком процесу, в результаті якого бібліотекарі стали сприйматися як реальна сила при формуванні демократичної опозиції урядам. Основним інструментом бібліотек в цій області є вільний доступ до інформації та вільне самовиявлення. Бібліотеки стоять на службі громадських інтересів, як обмежуючи дії влади, так і перешкоджаючи поширенню безладдя. Їх діяльність направляєється й підтримується законом. Громадянське суспільство припускає ефективний контроль над діями влади не тільки зі сторони правових чи законодавчих інститутів, але й формування системи демократичної опозиції, що постійно розвивається на всіх рівнях державної влади.

В доповіді обговорюється та роль, яку можуть взяти на себе бібліотеки як джерело і каталізатор формування демократичної опозиції в сучасних вільних суспільствах. Для існування та розвитку демократії в суспільстві повинні бути можливості для діалогу, діяльності опозиції і протесту. Ці можливості повинні бути включені в структуру і діяльність влади на всіх рівнях: від муніципальних рад і адміністрацій до законодавчої і виконавчої гілок влади на загальнодержавному рівні. Проте діяльність громадян в цьому напрямку може бути ефективною лише в тому випадку, якщо вони добре інформовані, знають свої права та обов'язки, і обізнані в усіх діях і гріхах уряду. В іншому випадку в суспільстві спостерігатиметься дефіцит демократії, і суспільство опиниться під контролем олігархів, чиновників, однієї партії чи тирана.

Бібліотеки – природні центри інформації і обміну поглядами. Завдяки цьому вони мають зіграти вирішальну роль в інформуванні громадян, які будуть позбавлені від страху, згадають про роль народу в історії боротьби за волю і про те, що у них достатньо сили для реформування чи зміни уряду.

Коротко проаналізовано три типи можливого внеску в справу демократії тих бібліотек, які працюють з урядовою інформацією, а також їх непрості відносини зі ЗМІ. Наводяться результати порівняльного аналізу внеску бібліотек в розвиток демократії в парламентських державах (Канада чи Великобританія) і президентських державах (Франція, США, Україна чи Російська Федерація).

In Moscow in the third week of August 1991, during the first days of the 57th IFLA General Conference and Council, the Soviet Union was in the summer doldrums of its last year. No-one expected trouble. President Gorbachev was at his dacha by the Black Sea; only a few senior Politburo officials were left in the city. Then the librarians of Moscow and of the world were shocked by the early Monday morning television news announcement: Gorbachev had fallen! The old guard of the Politburo had seized power in the Kremlin with the support of the KGB.

Within hours the story of the coup that all the world knows began to unfold. Barricades went up in the streets, even as people ignored the coup and continued trying to commute to work by car and by Metro. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, by far the largest Soviet republic, rallied opposition to the Soviet coup at the White House, the Russian Parliament building, only two kilometers away from the Kremlin. Crowds gathered in his support. News broadsheets and decrees against the coup plotters began to appear on the Metro walls. The KGB brought in tanks but stayed its hand rather than attack the crowds of people around the White House. In the pelting rain and tense standoff of Tuesday night an inexperienced young tank driver killed three of the protestors with his vehicle, the only casualties. By Wednesday afternoon, their support evaporating, the coup plotters had fled from the Kremlin. Gorbachev, released from house arrest, was brought back to Moscow by Yeltsin, but the downward spiral of surrender of powers to the Russian Federation, of republican declarations of sovereignty and independence had begun, which resulted in the implosion of the outmoded Soviet state before the year was out.

What the world largely does not know is that the librarians of Moscow and the world, attending the 57th IFLA Conference, were on the front lines by reason of their central location in the city and their professional commitment during the failed counter-revolution against Gorbachev. On the first morning of the coup and throughout the week we international librarians found ourselves navigating the barricades as we resolutely continued our professional events. We saw Yeltsin rallying the opposition from atop a tank outside the White House. When Russia's librarians published underground newspapers against the coup, we were there. We danced with our Russian colleagues, three thousand strong, at the IFLA party in the

Kremlin on the very night the coup collapsed. Black and white library colleagues from South Africa, from the Baltic States, and from around the world walked that night through the streets of Moscow singing freedom songs. The next day I was on my way to a seminar at the Russian State Scientific and Technical Library when the ragtag crowd with the old Russian flag, like the famous Delacroix painting *Liberty leading the people*, poured into the square outside Liubianka Prison and shouted «Death to the KGB» while pulling down the statue of the founder of the Soviet secret police.

In the streets of Moscow in August 1991 a spontaneous resistance by the people took place, for democracy, civil society, and the rule of law, and we librarians of the world were a part of it. In the days of the coup we were agents of information, of international solidarity with the Russian people, of opposition to the regime, of political change. But as a profession we too were changed, not just in Russia but around the world, towards the path of democratic activism. IFLA became in the ensuing years a professional force for free access to information and freedom of expression, demanding social responsibility and democratic values of the world's librarians.

In a paper called «Libraries and the public interest» which I gave here in the Crimea in 2003, I explored what this means in terms of the relationship between the library profession and governments. In an era of war, terrorism and decline of civic values I argued that we have to define more precisely just what is the role of libraries in delivering government information and information about governments. Some might prefer the public library, which is funded by the state, to be an adjunct of the state in promoting politically correct information, patriotism and the objectives of national development. Basing myself on a radical historical analysis, I argued for a more subversive role for libraries. As centers of intellectual freedom and havens of political dissent, libraries in the Western tradition have filled a vital role in building and preserving democracy by allowing the public to think and to criticize freely, to seek hidden information and to find out what their governments would prefer they not know.

Hence librarians are engaged, not detached, in the struggle to better the world they serve. They have a role to play in legal and institutional reform, in raising environmental concerns, in educating citizens and voters – not through partisan political activity but through a commitment in their work to furthering the quest for truth, beauty, human rights, and the rule of law. My conclusion: Librarians should not be servants of government or channels of propaganda, but defenders of the people against government's excesses and failures.

In particular, we as librarians have an ethical duty to help bring democratic ideals of free access to information and freedom of expression into full flower in the communities and societies we serve, in order to build up the democratic opposition to whatever regime is in power. This is an essential part of the formation of a free and healthy civil society both ruled and supported by law. For such a society presupposes effective checks on the power of government, not only by other institutional actors such as the judiciary or the legislature, but by an ongoing system of participative and adversarial democracy at all levels of state power.

Here I come to my central point. Libraries have a role to play as both a resource and a catalyst for the democratic opposition in modern free societies. As a resource, because they can provide not just government information but information about governments, at all levels, to help citizens make informed choices. And as a catalyst, because they can become venues for activities and intellectual debate within the community, creating opportunities for democratic life to survive and grow.

Democracy development through libraries is a never-ending, circular process, as resource feeds action which demands more of the resource. For example, if democratic life is to survive and grow in a society there must be opportunities for consultation, opposition and protest built into the fabric and experience of public administration, from the level of municipal councils and service authorities to the level of the national legislature and the national executive. Libraries are a natural venue in which to host events for the public exchange of ideas on political subjects, whether local or national. Hence they can provide a public forum for political consultation, political opposition, even political protest, though jealously guarding their own neutrality. But such citizen action in relation to governing bodies can only flourish where there is an informed citizenry which knows its rights and its public responsibilities, the policies and deeds of governments and their sins. This demands that the library, through its reference service and its public provision of documentation, do constantly more to feed the appetite of political actors for information and civic education. Otherwise there will be a democratic deficit of citizen knowledge and citizen commitment both,

and the most democratic society will gradually revert to the control of oligarchies, bureaucrats, a single political party or a tyrant.

I conclude that the library has a vital role to play in creating an informed and unafraid citizenry, by providing both instruction and opportunities for action. Indeed, where else but in schools and libraries can citizens learn so well of their history of freedom and of the sacrifices it demands? Where can they better become convinced of their power to reform and to change governments? Where better can they locally gather to talk of politics and public issues in a neutral, informed atmosphere?

Libraries should not remain above politics. Rather, they should package and provide free access to political information in a way that respects the democratic right of voters to choose yet provides them with the pros and cons of public policy positions and government actions. They should also not merely be government information repositories, but provide venues for political encounter and free expression in the community.

Indeed, I would argue that for every hall of reference to government documents a library serving the public should also have a venue for town hall meetings, those gatherings in the American political tradition in which ordinary citizens come to ask pointed questions and debate public issues in person with elected leaders, political candidates, government experts or public officials. Such public meetings to hold government accountable and argue about policy are often provocative and seldom respectful of authority. As Gorbachev already grasped in his crowd walkabouts, they are at the heart of participatory democracy.

But I want now to examine in more detail the different types of democratic contribution that can be made by library professionals who manage and provide government information. At the Alexandria pre-conference on *Libraries: the information society in action*, held by IFLA in November 2005 just prior to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, I spoke on «Libraries and the informed body politic: supporting local, parliamentary and direct democracy in the future information society». Yes, there are three democracies: the local, which we have from ancient Greece; the representative, national type, which we have from Western Europe and America; and the direct popular type, in which the hierarchical structure of the social pyramid has been turned on its head through California-style ballot propositions and public electronic consultations on the Internet. I argued in Alexandria that the provision of government information and information about governments by libraries to meet citizen needs, whether in traditional or in electronic format, had to be tailored to each of these three distinct modes of democracy.

In the post-Soviet context this means, for example, that local provision of government information by libraries should respect, not entirely ignore, the collectivist idea of workers' councils with a say in the means of production, through the holding of public briefing sessions or provision of Internet sites aimed at local economic communities of interest. If a large proportion of the local population are coal-miners, package economic and political information for the coal workers, not for an undifferentiated audience! At the regional or national level, the provision of government information by libraries should address frankly the anti-democratic, authoritarian tradition inherited from Russian and Soviet history, through a deliberate attempt to highlight a diversity of anti-establishment viewpoints in collections and on websites. And libraries should take the lead in providing parallel opportunities to the public outside the electoral system to express and know their direct views on public issues, local or national, whether by hosting Internet consultations, giving access to polling results or collaboration with the media.

The mass media, of course, and especially television, pose a problem for democracy in former Soviet space because of the renewed concentration of power or influence over the media in the hands of the state. But the problem is universal. Governments in the West too manipulate information, and the media are full of oversimplified, distorted or just plain false government information in the guise of news stories. I refer you to such recent foreign studies as Canadian philosopher Randall Marlin's *Propaganda and the ethics of persuasion* (2002) or Vladimir Volkoff's French investigation, *Petite histoire de la désinformation: du cheval de Troie à Internet* (1999). In 2003 I argued here in my paper on «Media images, propaganda, and their impact on democracy» that the way for librarians to help the public correct the government misinformation and disinformation so often found in print, on television and on the Internet is to be judicious and balanced in our selection of information sources, encourage critical reading of government statements, and teach library clients to know the enemy – the tricks of persuasion, political propaganda and falsification that governments use to influence media coverage.

I want to finish by exploring some differences between the representative democracies in how safely librarians can be a resource and a catalyst for the democratic opposition. I have already noted that librari-

ans must adapt themselves to the needs of their public in three distinct types of democratic setting: local democracy, representative national democracy, and direct popular democracy. Now I want to illustrate that there are differences in representative national democracy itself by country, which influence the role that libraries are able to play in the country's democratic development as a multi-party state. These differences can broadly be grouped according to whether the country has a parliamentary or a presidential constitution: in parliamentary states such as Britain or Canada or in presidential states such as France, the United States of America, Ukraine or the Russian Federation.

All these countries have elected representative assemblies (the House of Commons, the House of Representatives, the Assemblée nationale, the Verkhovna Rada, the State Duma) to which the government is responsible, and all but Ukraine have second chambers selected with more or less democracy (the House of Lords, the Senate, the Council of Federation) which in most cases seek to balance regional interests. All have both a head of state (queen, governor general, president) and a head of government (prime minister), except the United States where the President combines the two functions. In all cases the most powerful person in the state is elected by popular vote, directly or indirectly.

But the crucial difference between what I call parliamentary and presidential states is that in a pure parliamentary state the head of state is a figurehead and the person with the most power – the prime minister in Britain or Canada – is directly responsible to the representative chamber, must answer hard questions there daily, and can be defeated and lose power by a simple parliamentary vote on a question of confidence, causing a general election. In presidential states like France, the United States and Russia, even if the governing political party loses a majority or the president is of a different political stripe than the government, the president ultimately controls the levers of state power and remains in office for a fixed term. Furthermore, President Bush or President Putin only visits parliament once a year, to declare the state of the federation and government policy, without having to face daily parliamentary questions.

What this signifies for the development and stability of democratic opposition at the national level is profound. In presidential states the person in ultimate power is less frequently challenged and less easily removed, even if subject to the ultimate sanction of a re-election campaign after a lengthy term, and is accordingly much less responsive to public opinion and more inclined to abuses of power. The tenure of the leader of a parliamentary state is more precarious and subject to challenge, and accordingly more tentative. Political opposition in presidential states is more likely to be viewed as disloyalty to the government, in parliamentary states as the citizens' sovereign right. Paradoxically, press manipulation may be more extreme in presidential states, even if the press sometimes takes greater liberties, because the presidential state, with a more entrenched leader, tends to become a government by media and has to control the questions of the media to maintain popular legitimacy and democratic respectability. When a parliamentary state's leader loses these marks of public support it is because of questions in parliament, the government falls and the opposition quietly takes power; when the leader of a presidential state loses them, there is a wave of public protest, an impeachment or an Orange Revolution.

This is just to say that librarians supporting political opposition in parliamentary states do so as part of the institutional structure of civil society; in presidential states, even democracies, they are more open to be put beyond social pale by accusations of inappropriate bias, revolutionary leanings, or communist or terrorist sympathies. Accordingly librarians providing even balanced support for opposition to the government through the provision of library resources or the use of library premises tend to operate in a more polarized, radical, dangerous and unstable environment in presidential than in parliamentary democracies.

I do not want to make too much of this application of political science to librarianship. There have, I am sure, been cases in Britain or in Canada of librarians and libraries censoring themselves rather than run the risk of public disapproval for politically unpopular information provision. But it is American, and I suspect, Russian, librarians who have more cause to worry and more reason to struggle continuously for the democratic education of citizens, free access to information and freedom of expression, in their increasingly monolithic presidential democracies.

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